

# Promoting the Health of Pollinators along WSDOT's Roadsides

WSDOT's strategic plan includes an Environmental Stewardship goal — as part of meeting this goal, WSDOT is taking action to protect pollinators. Pollinators are crucial to Washington's agricultural industry and support a healthy ecosystem.

**T**he agency maintains approximately 100,000 acres of non-paved rights of way, including roadsides and wetlands, of which a significant portion is available for pollinator habitat and forage. WSDOT is in a unique position to enhance and conserve habitat.

## What WSDOT is doing for pollinators:

- Preserving native habitat, whenever feasible.
- Managing roadsides for natural succession.
- Restoring project disturbances using native plants, including woody native flowering species, and providing other habitat features such as logs and snags for native bees and birds.
- WSDOT will continue managing the roadside with mowing along the pavement edge as needed for driver safety. But in other areas beyond the pavement edge, mowing will only be done if it's planned as part of a multi-year treatment strategy using a



To benefit pollinators, WSDOT will be more conscious of planting flowering plants to provide pollen, nectar and larval food across the entirety of the growing season.

variety of vegetation management tools.

- Collaborating with others to seek opportunities for partnerships to promote the health of pollinators.

## Locations for pollinator habitat:

- Wider areas of roadside right of way
- Wetland mitigation and stream restoration sites
- Natural areas preserved as a result of the Highway Beautification Act
- Rest areas



Gold Creek Wetland Mitigation Site, I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East: Manage not just for nectar sources, but also for nesting and overwintering habitat (larval host plants, bare ground, sun exposure, dead wood).

## Policies and practices in place to promote pollinator habitat:

- Our reduced mowing and selective herbicide use policy will help protect pollinators. By leaving roadsides in a more natural state, we can provide pollinators with sources of nectar, pollen, larval host plants and nesting locations needed for them to grow and thrive.
- Our roadside policy gives preference to long-lived native plant species that can compete against or exclude weeds and grow with minimal maintenance

after plant establishment.

Landscape designers will provide diversity to the greatest extent feasible and plan for a succession of flowering times to improve pollinator habitat.

- WSDOT has developed maintenance guidance that protects pollinator species and their habitat. The guidance provides pollinator-friendly vegetation management practices within the highway right-of-way located within or near prairie ecosystems or milkweed habitat areas.
- **The above represents conducting work with a greater awareness – not a change in budget.**

### Future opportunities:

- Increase awareness of the importance of pollinators and why WSDOT is working to protect and enhance the habitat pollinators need to thrive.
- Conduct habitat preservation, enhancement or restoration in areas identified as high priority pollinator areas by a study that is in progress.



Manage for multiple species: Bees, butterflies, ants, spiders, beetles, birds, bats, wasps, moths, flies, etc.



WSDOT is working closely with area farmers to minimize and mitigate for project impacts to Alkali Bee beds.

- Update Area Integrated Vegetation Management plans annually as need to protect pollinators.
- Find grant opportunities for pilot projects to enhance pollinator habitat in areas like the prairie community at the Scatter Creek Rest Area or along the Interstate 82 corridor.
- Monitor the effectiveness of sites using pollinator seed mixes.

For resources and guidance on how you can promote pollinator health, visit: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Design/Roadside/Pollinators.htm>

### MORE INFORMATION

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